For a while now, in certain circles on the right, the term POSWID—an acronym that means 'the Purpose of a System is What it Does'—has been steadily gaining popularity as an explanatory tool for certain phenomena that cannot otherwise be explained using the conventional abstract principles the right usually uses when making political judgments.

Here is Dave Greene explaining the concept using an analogy:

> Suppose you are in charge of an ice cream distribution system, making the frozen confection in large refrigerated containers and then shipping it to customers who want to eat it cold. The purpose of your system is to deliver high-quality ice cream. Fair enough. But then you

notice a problem. While the ice cream sent to most locations arrives fine, the shipments sent to Hawaii arrive melted and spoiled, certainly NOT the purpose of your system. Subsequently, when doing a follow-up investigation, you discover that the spoilage was due to a design flaw in the packaging that comes apart in humid climates and that fixing this design flaw is beyond your technical capabilities with the resources available. It looks as if, like it or not, this problem will be a persistent, unfixable feature of your system. Yet orders from Honolulu for ice cream keep coming in and you keep sending it out.

At this point, the purpose of the system is what it does. Knowing what the reality is, you can no longer retreat into ignorance and excuses.

Now, one of the core criticisms made of POSWID by its opponents is that it leans heavily on a consequentialist interpretation of events, completely discarding the roles human intention, error, and agency play in how things transpire.

However, these critiques only hold validity if you take POSWID and make it your singular mode of analysis—something that I don't encourage, nor intend on doing myself. Rather, POSWID should be understood and used as a specific tool with a specific purpose—that is, to peel back the noxious platitudes, gaslighting, and wishful thinking that envelop our politics, and hinder our ability to view our present situation with clarity and honesty.

And, unfortunately for the citizenry of Canada, Canadian politics is—and has been for some time—a domain chock full of the misguided idealism and obfuscation that POSWID seeks to erase.

It is why many Canadians—despite their country having experienced a precipitous decline in both general prosperity and the integrity of the common social fabric—remain willfully blind to such an absurd degree.

POSWID, as I will be applying it, can tackle many of the polite pleasantries and mindless incantations that have become embedded in Canada's 'consensus' of acceptable political discourse, exposing them as misaligned with reality. This will take one of two forms: the first is to

demonstrate that a common belief in the trope in question has led to results contrary to the intentions of those who originally pushed the trope; the second is that the trope was always purely abstract and aspirational, never described reality, and any attempts to align reality with said trope have failed miserably.

Many of these tropes are sacred cows of Canada's political establishment—ideas that they would insist define "what it means to be Canadian" or are things that "we all believe". Going against them, or merely questioning their validity or suitability, would be considered "UnCanadian". These tropes have, in many cases, dictated the direction of Canadian society since the 1960s and created the foundations for the paradigms that currently define Canadian politics. Therefore, the deconstruction of these tropes constitutes the deconstruction of these paradigms—something that would have cascading ramifications for our country.

It is worth noting, however, that my intention in writing this piece is not to make granular policy prescriptions. My job is merely to provide a

clear-eyed account of how three of the values and policy programmes of Canada's chattering class (you could substitute "chattering class" with "professional-managerial class" or "Laurentian Elite") are out of step with how this country actually exists—a reality felt and experienced at an intuitive level by many, but rarely articulated in public.

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Trope #1: Canada is a Bilingual Country

Since the Official Languages Act of 1969, the notion that Canada is an "officially bilingual country" has been deeply embedded in the practices of our federal government to the point where most bureaucratic positions within the Canadian government require both French and English fluency. But is the term "bilingual" an accurate description of the reality of Canada, both now and in 1969?

Let's start by breaking down the word "bilingual". The prefix "bi" means "two" or "double", seemingly indicating that the two objects being

referenced carry equal value. Bicycles have two wheels of the same size; binoculars feature two equally shaped refracting telescopes.

From this, it is reasonable to conclude that an implementation of "bilingualism" would be appropriate in a country where there are two dominant languages, and those two languages are spoken by roughly similarly sized groups of the population. Half of the population would learn the language spoken by the other half of the population, and vice versa. There would also be a sizable pre-existing chunk of the population that is already bilingual. However, you may ask, does this describe Canada? Did the Canada of 1969 meet these two preconditions? How about Canada presently?

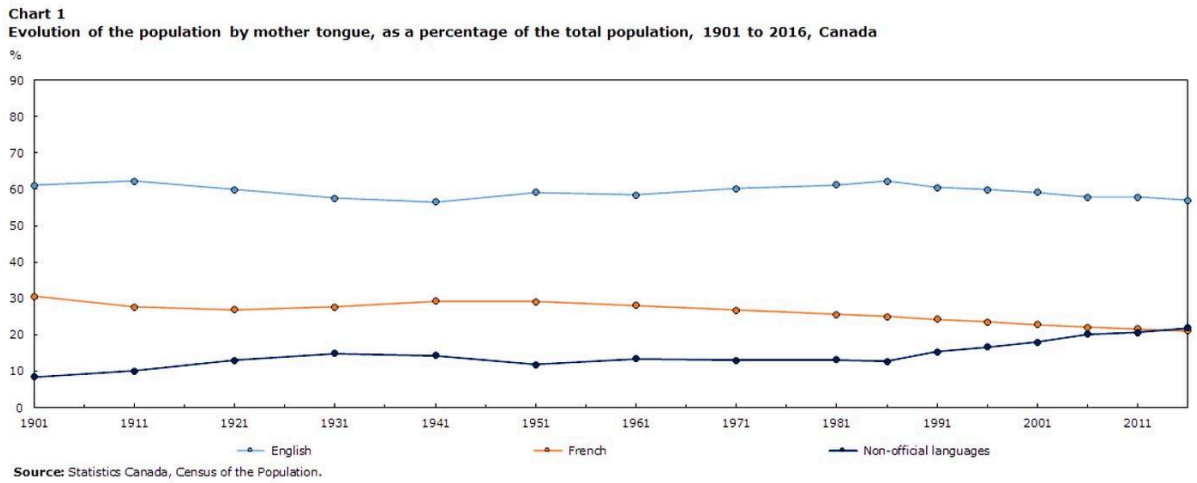
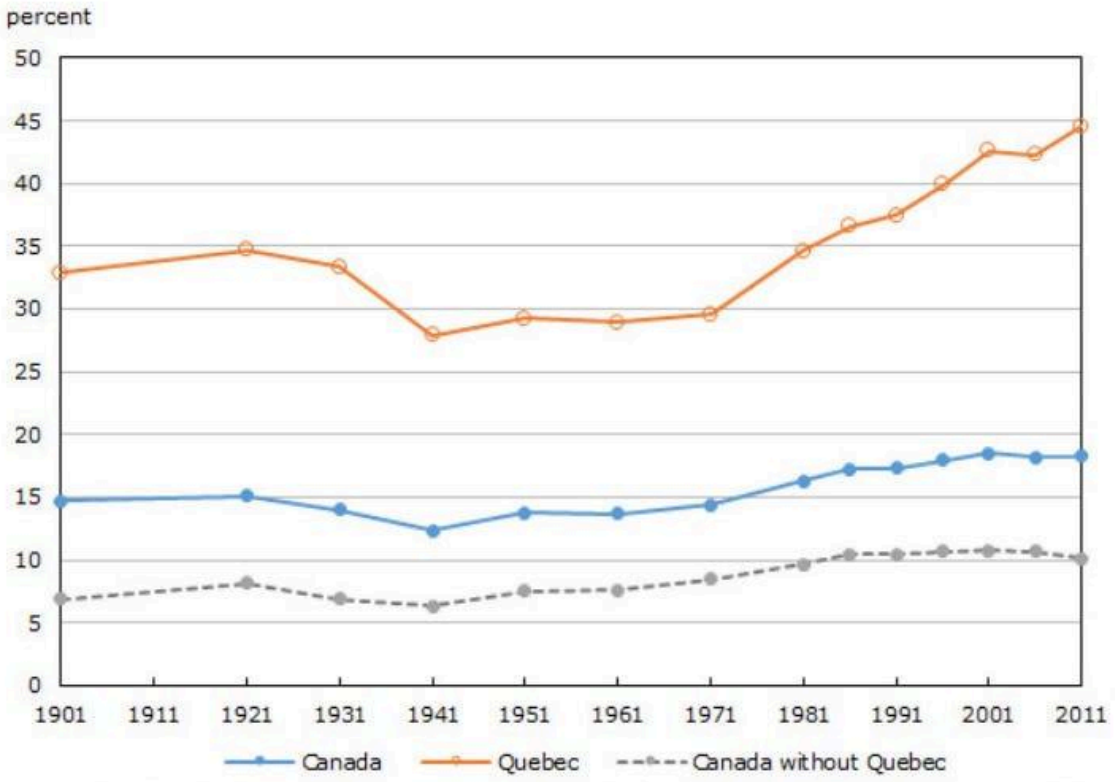


Chart 1
Percentage of the population aged 5 years and older who reported being able to speak English and French, Canada, Quebec and Canada excluding Quebec, 1901 to 2011



Note: The data for the 1901 to 1941 censuses of population are based on sample files generated from those censuses.
Source: Censuses of Canada, 1901 to 2011.

As you can see from the two charts above, the answer is a definitive “no”. In 1900, anglophones outnumbered francophones by a roughly 2-to-1 ratio; that ratio has only expanded since then to reach 3-to-1, as the number of immigrants who speak neither English nor French has increased. And based on the latter chart, Canada was never more than 15% bilingual before the passage of the Official Languages Act.

The conception of Canada as a "perfectly bilingual country" was always nothing more than pure abstraction, unaligned with on-the-ground realities when the entire country is taken into account.

This, naturally, brings us to our next question: the Official Languages Act mandated the use of French in many government positions; did it also result in Canada containing a significantly larger cohort of people fluent in both languages?

Again, the answer is "no". The number of fluently bilingual people has barely crept upwards since 1969, reaching a paltry 18.0% as of the 2021 Census. But why is this? Why has over five decades of official policy failed to produce much of anything?

First, it is worth noting that since Canada is a majority English-speaking country, more people would have to learn French than learn English by a considerable margin for some semblance of actual bilingualism to be achieved. This means that the French fluency numbers are critical when answering this question.

And, when the French fluency numbers are broken down on a province-by-province basis, vast disparities between the provinces are revealed—disparities that likely make substantial increases in bilingualism nigh-impossible. The overwhelming majority of Quebeckers (84.1%) and a sizable chunk of New Brunswickers (34.0%) can speak French. Outside of those provinces, though, the numbers are microscopic—no other province (or territory) has a francophone population exceeding 15%; Saskatchewan and Nunavut even dip below 5%. Remember that these numbers are purely self-reported; I'm sure many people claim to be French speakers on the Census but are simply bluffing.

For people outside of Quebec, northern and eastern New Brunswick, and select parts of Ontario, there is little incentive to actually speak, read, write, or learn French, as it is absolutely irrelevant to the functioning of their daily lives. A handful of upper-middle-class households may send their children to French immersion schools; however, the French language skills of these children often evaporate once they leave school and enter into new contexts in which those skills are superfluous.

“Canada is a bilingual country” is a phrase that has never reflected reality, and over half a century of policy on the books has not manifested a country dramatically more bilingual than the one that existed in 1969. Instead, what official bilingualism has done is restrict employment in much of the federal bureaucracy to a narrow sliver of the population that disproportionately comes from a select geographic region—which, in turn, means that large swathes of the country are essentially barred from participation in the federal government beyond a certain point. That is the Purpose of Bilingualism because that is What It Does.

Trope #2: Canada is a Multicultural Country

Somewhat more nebulous in character—yet just as beloved by Canadian officialdom—is the concept of multiculturalism.

For decades, multiculturalism has been pushed using near-mythological and utopian terms; in theory, it is a framework under which people from all cultures and backgrounds can live harmoniously with each other, something that magically dissipates all ethnic and tribal tensions that once defined interactions between groups.

Yet multiculturalism—despite the never-ending repetition of sanguine bromides in its favour—has always been a rather thin concept that is defined by the era it finds itself in rather than the other way around.

And when it was introduced, multiculturalism was never even an accurate descriptor of the country it was foisted upon. Canada in 1971—the year that multiculturalism was implemented—was a country composed overwhelmingly of Europeans and Christians and had a strong shared culture. Multiculturalism, like many other Canadian policies, was always more of a normative policy, describing the way things *should* be rather than the way things are in actuality. In that sense, it was always misaligned with reality.

In the published report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, which is seen as having paved the way for the Multiculturalism Act of 1971, the concept of multiculturalism translates to meaning "unity in diversity".

However, "unity in diversity" is itself somewhat of an oxymoron, lacking in clarity and specificity. This nebulousness created a lack of guardrails

that could potentially prevent a reinterpretation of the phrase or an overemphasis on certain parts over others, which is what happened.

In particular, the "diversity" aspect of multiculturalism was pushed to the extent that the "unity" aspect became essentially non-existent—a development that can largely be chalked up to the internationalist and postmodernist "end of history" ethos of the late 20th century, which de-emphasized sweeping narratives and distinctions between places and peoples.

Pierre Trudeau himself—the architect of the policy—provided an articulate summation of this issue over a decade after his exit from federal politics, as explained in this quote from a MacDonald—Laurier Institute article:

> And so, what the commission's report *said*, "unity in diversity," appears to be what Pierre Trudeau *meant* by multiculturalism. At some point in the mid-1990s, Trudeau lamented before a private audience that contemporary multiculturalism had not turned out as he had intended. Former Liberal MP John Bryden, who was present, later

> reported Trudeau's criticism: multiculturalism, he said, had been "twisted to celebrate a newcomer's country of origin and not a celebration of the newcomer becoming part of the Canadian fabric."

Since the mid-1990s, things have only gotten worse, and Canada's previously high levels of social cohesion and social trust have rapidly disintegrated. One only needs to look at the extreme degree of ethnic balkanization present in the suburbs of Canada's major cities to illustrate this point. Markham is 49% East Asian, while Richmond is 57%; Brampton is 52%[1] South Asian, and parts of Surrey are close to 70%. Many of these communities operate as self-enclosed ghettos that rarely interact with each other, or the broader Canadian society writ large.

These ghettos, in turn, have become breeding grounds for ideological movements that are at best indifferent to the country they operate within—if not actively hostile. The fact that the Khalistani movement—which is wholly focused on establishing a homeland for fundamentalist Sikhs in the Punjab province of India—plays such an outsized role in Canada's political sphere is a testament to this.

Meanwhile, Canadians' faith in the ability of migrants to integrate into our society has waned, and Canada's immigration intake—high for decades, yet truly astronomical in the last few years—has come under intense scrutiny, even in elite circles that were once fastidiously pro-immigration (although I think that much of this elite reversal on immigration can be attributed more to self-preservation than a genuine change of heart.

Multiculturalism, for its part, has shifted from being understood within the previous "end of history" framework and now finds itself situated within a post-colonial, grievance-based matrix that denigrates Western civilization and posits that it is an ontological evil needing to be fully dismantled. This narrative, besides being far more militant and aggressive than what came before, is completely far-removed from the "unity in diversity" mantra championed by Pierre Trudeau—yet, strangely enough, doesn't seem to find fault with the concept of multiculturalism.

Like bilingualism, multiculturalism has always been an abstraction that has never accurately described how Canada operates in effect. Unlike with bilingualism, though, multiculturalism as official government policy didn't come with a clear set of intentions on what should be achieved. Instead, its inherent vagueness allowed it to act as an empty skinsuit to be filled by the various ideological trends that arose in the decades after its passage. Because of this, it is difficult to say if the way multiculturalism has been implemented has strayed from the stated objectives of multiculturalism as a concept. However, the goals of the anti-white, anti-western movements that have laundered their ideas into the mainstream by using multiculturalism as their vessel would seem completely alien to those who first conceived of the original "unity in diversity" mantra. Therefore, the Purpose of Multiculturalism is to disintegrate the Canadian social fabric, ethnically balkanize the country, and delegitimize the civilization that Canada was built by because that is What It Does.

Trope #3: Canada is a Westminster Parliamentary Democracy

There is perhaps no platitude that center-left politicians adore more than "democracy", especially when "democracy" is referred to in a possessive sense ("our democracy"). To them, "democracy" is an unassailable, unambiguous good that both completely describes the workings of our political system and needs constant, vigilant protection against "existential threats".

In Canada, democracy platitudes take on a distinctive form, emphasizing that *our democracy* is not just any old democracy but a *Westminster Parliamentary Democracy*[2]. Technically, this term refers to Canada having the same constitutional monarchy (which separates head of state and head of government into two different positions) plus a blending of the executive and legislative branches of government found in the Yookay and other commonwealth countries.

One gets the sense, though, that the constant need to drone on about *Westminster Parliamentary Democracy* goes beyond merely a neutral description of our system of governance and instead symbolizes something else—but what?

One clue as to how the phrase *Westminster Parliamentary Democracy* is commonly understood could perhaps come from Elizabeth May's cringefest at the 2015 Parliamentary Press Gallery Dinner, where she says the following:

> I don't believe in running for Prime Minister because our Parliamentary system of Westminster Parliamentary Democracy means that all MPs are equals, and none of us are elected to be dictator. Sorry Stephen.

Elizabeth May, in her drunken exuberance, succinctly summarized the essence of what "Westminster Parliamentary Democracy" ostensibly is: all MPs are equal and none of them are elected to be dictator.

But, looking at how the Canadian political system operates in effect, is any of this true?

Let's start with the plight of the humble Canadian MP, and the supposed equalness and significance of all 343 of them.

The vague notion that backbench MPs are, to some degree, powerless and impotent is a well-known fact of the Canadian political system—yet this fact is still worth bringing up every time "our democracy" incantations are uttered. *Tragedy in the Commons*—a book published in 2014, yet completely relevant today—provides a compelling account of this, with many of the Canadian political system's myriad dysfunctions explained in detail through the accounts of former MPs. These dysfunctions stem from both political parties (opaque rules surrounding nomination races, the scripted nature of what MPs say in the House of Commons) and larger systems (the futility of using Question Period as a mechanism to hold the government to account, the centralization of political power in the PMO, the difficulty in passing a Private Members' Bill). If one of these problems is taken and isolated from the rest, it may not seem significant. Yet when all these issues are compounded on top of each other, they add up to a system where unelected bureaucrats and a handful of elected politicians control virtually all political power, while the vast majority of people sent directly to Ottawa by voters play a vanishingly small role in the decision-making process.

That is What Our Parliament Does, That is its Purpose.

With “all MPs are equal” dismantled, let’s move on to the “none of us are elected to be dictator”

The role of the Canadian Prime Minister, in theory, is supposed to be the “first among equals”—someone who steers the ship, but is ultimately held to account by his party caucus, the House of Commons as a whole, the Senate, the news media, and ‘neutral’ third-party agents such as the auditor general.

But—I have used this line (albeit worded differently) many times in this piece, and it is starting to get somewhat formulaic—is this the case in actuality?

As Jeffrey Simpson explains in his book about the powers of the Canadian Prime Minister, *The Friendly Dictatorship,* the PM enjoys levels of control over governmental affairs unparalleled in other WEIRD countries:

The Canadian prime minister is more powerful within this system than any democratically elected leader in other advanced industrial countries. The U.S. president governs within a checks-and-balances in which his proposals must be chewed over by two legislative bodies with much weaker party discipline than there is in the Canadian House of Commons. The Senate must approve major presidential nominations, including his cabinet choices and Supreme Court appointments. The French prime minister serves at the behest of the president, who can replace prime ministers at will, but the French president's power do not extend to day-to-do management of the government. The Australian prime minister can be deposed at any time by his own caucus and must sometimes deal with an elected Senate controlled by parties other than his own. The German chancellor invariably presides over a coalition - in recent years Christian Democrat, Christian Social Union, and Liberal Democrat or Social Democrat/Green - and must find ways of getting legislation approved by an upper house composed of representatives of the German Länder, or states.

Few of the checks and balances described in the quotation above apply to the Canadian system.

Backbench MPs in the Prime Minister's caucus—who can, in theory, hold the PM to account—rarely do. Part of this is structural—the Liberal caucus has repeatedly rejected to adopt the Reform Act, which lets caucus fire the party leader through a simple majority vote (as was done with Erin O'Toole). Yet, to me at least, there is a great deal of cowardice involved in the reticence MPs have when it comes to challenging the party leader.

The House of Commons can challenge the PM—but only under a minority government, considering the aforementioned pliancy of the government caucus. And even then, parties that are ideologically aligned with the government (cough cough, the NDP, cough cough) can prostrate themselves before the government and turn a minority into a *de facto* majority.

The Senate is technically a check on the PM's power—but, as is common knowledge, acts as nothing more than a rubber stamp on the HoC and a repository of patronage appointments.

And, finally, we arrive at the news media. They receive billions in subsidies from the government, which naturally makes them reluctant to offer anything beyond the mildest of pushback.

So really, the checks against the PM's power are either weak or non-existent.

Considering this, it is no surprise that U.S. President Woodrow Wilson—a noted fan of top-down executive control—preferred the parliamentary system over the American republican model.

Now, you may ask, if the "all MPs are equal, none can be dictator" mantra is blatantly false, then what is meant when the "our democracy" or "our system of *Westminster Parliamentary Democracy*" bromides are uttered?

To answer this question, one only needs to look at the tail end of Elizabeth May's quotation: "Sorry Stephen".

For those on the center-left who invoke "democracy" *ad nauseam*, "democracy" is nothing more than code for the values, mores, and policy preferences of the white-collar upper-middle-class liberals who staff the NGOs, professional organizations, and sprawling bureaucracies that the government both funds and relies on. To them, "democracy" is synonymous with intangible values such as "equality" and "human rights", and expresses itself in policies such as tolerance of transgenderism or abortion. It is not a cut-and-dry political system where the general populace voices its views through means of voting (such a system, if it produces the "wrong" election results, is denigrated as "populism") but rather a way of life that relies on a bloated managerial state to survive. Therefore, threats to the size and scope of that managerial state are "threats against democracy".

To Elizabeth May, Stephen Harper—a man who was democratically elected three times, and relied on the executive branch to govern no

more than most PMs—was an affront to *Westminster Parliamentary Democracy* because he strayed from the center-left PMC values held by her and the Canadian political establishment. He threatened both their actual political power and their sense of absolute moral authority. For that reason, he was a "threat to democracy".

Therefore, the Purpose of Invoking the Term "Westminster Parliamentary Democracy" is to sublimate "democracy" into meaning "our interests" while ignoring or justifying the undemocratic nature of much of Canada's political system.

Abstract Principles vs. System-level analysis

The POSWID concept is one that I could apply to vast swaths of the Canadian political system. There are so many examples of situations in Canada where stated intentions and actual results are so divergent that you have to assume that those repeating the misaligned bromides are either willfully blind or malicious liars. Of the additional examples I can think of, healthcare, criminal justice, and immigration seem particularly juicy.

These, however, would be more policy-based analyses, whereas the three I've done so far concentrate on aspects of Canada's identity that were molded in the 1960s and collectively form a paradigm that we've lived under ever since.

What I will end with, though, is a reflection on the failings of the right as it relates to using a system-level analysis when discussing policy failures.

In particular, I want to lay out a quote from the late paleoconservative writer Sam Francis in his essay collection *Beautiful Losers*, which is an extended reflection on the failings of modern conservatism:

> The presuppositions of these pieces are perhaps somewhat different from those of most of the writing produced by conservative intellectuals since World War II. Those writers tended to approach political theory in a way that might be called formalistic and normative—that is, they sought to offer morally right and philosophically true prescriptions for public affairs—and they did so in terms of philosophy, theology, and ethics, with a good deal of attention to imaginative literature. Eric Voegelin, Leo Strauss, Richard

Weaver, and most of their disciples are examples of this approach to conservative thought at the highest levels of academic theory; Ludwig von Mises and F. A. Hayek are similar examples in economic theory, and, among many others, National Review's Frank S. Meyer was representative of it in conservative journalism.

My conclusion that conservatism has transformed itself into virtual extinction will surprise and perhaps even anger those who favor the formalistic and normative approach, which does not easily stoop to considerations of social change and historical fluctuation and is reluctant to admit that some things, even ideas, fail. Regarding political events as the earthly manifestations of timeless abstractions, the intellectual mainstream of the "Old Right" from the end of World War II developed a highly sophisticated body of ideas and a highly articulate body of spokesmen to express them. Perhaps because they were too uxoriously wedded to Weaver's principle that "Ideas Have Consequences," most of the conservative intellectuals who subscribed to this body of thought always seemed to assume that it was only a

matter of time before their own beliefs would creep up on the ideas of the Left, slit their throats in the dark, and stage an intellectual and cultural coup d'état, after which truth would reign. I have never thought so, in part because I have less faith in the power of intellectual abstractions than most of my conservative colleagues. The historian Lewis Namier remarked that "new ideas are not nearly as potent as broken habits," and Burnham, describing Vilfredo Pareto's view of human rationality; wrote that "rational, deliberate, conscious belief does not, then, in general at any rate, determine what is going to happen to society; social man is not, as he has been defined for so many centuries, a primarily 'rational animal.'" 1 In the tradition of Namier (who briefly studied under Pareto) and Burnham, I place more emphasis on the concrete forces of elites, organization, and psychic and social forces such as class and regional and ethnic identity than on formal intellectual abstractions and their "logical" extrapolations as the determining forces of history. Ideas do have consequences, but some ideas have more consequences than others, and which consequences ensue from which ideas is settled not simply because

> the ideas serve human reason through their logical implications but also because some ideas serve human interests and emotions through their attachment to drives for political, economic, and social power, while other ideas do not.

In short, Francis says that too many rightist intellectuals have become overly attached to abstractions, to normative forms of analysis. In this, they have ignored alternative approaches, such as analyzing power dynamics and looking at how systems operate in effect. Utilizing these approaches would give the right a better idea of how to actually use political power effectively in the event of forming government, as they would have a clear-eyed view of how the system actually operates as opposed to the fruitless wish-casting they often engage in.

Francis uses the term *Beautiful Losers* as the title for his book. Such a title may seem harsh, but ultimately seems deserved once you read through a substantial portion of the book's essays. And considering the success of Canada's "conservative" (I put "conservative" in quotation marks because

they've failed to conserve anything) movement over the past decade, I think the *Beautiful Losers* moniker could be applied to them as well.

Even after losing four consecutive elections to the Liberals (including one held after ten years of painful managed decline), they've failed to produce any ideas that go beyond mediocre half-measures and warmed-over Harper incrementalism—despite getting lampooned by the left for their supposed "extremism".

At a base level, they still agree with the Liberals on the foundations of Canada's post-1960s paradigm—things like multiculturalism, bilingualism, and relatively high levels of immigration.

They don't realize What Time It Is, and yearn for a return to the supposed halcyon days of 2015—even though many of their abstract goals went unrealized during the Harper years.

To put it bluntly, they are unambitious and uninspiring.

Yet to completely write them off as milquetoast disappointments would be a mistake.

At a fundamental level, it is not in the nature of people who think of themselves as "conservatives" to go on the offensive or imagine what large-scale reforms they could enact. Conservatives, by definition, are focused on preserving what already exists within their immediate sphere. They have a strong moral dimension to their politics, and a shift in focus towards systems of power could seem somewhat amoral.

However, if many of those people who currently call themselves "conservatives" are unable or unwilling to accept that a change in approach is needed, I don't think Canada will be able to reorient itself and escape the current malaise and managed decline it finds itself in. The pot will continue to boil, the frog will lose consciousness, and the harshest critique of Canada's immigration system conservatives will be able to muster is that it was "broken by Trudeau".

What Canada needs now is to transition to an entirely new paradigm in terms of both political structure and national identity. The CPC—despite being more forceful in its current iteration than at just about any time in its history—doesn't seem to realize this. A mere

reversion to the policies of 2015, or 2006— or any other point in our post-1960s trajectory—is insufficient. Something new is needed. How soon this newness arrives—and who ends up delivering it—remains to be seen.

But, in the meantime, the POSWID concept can help those who have yet to realize What Time It Is come to grips with the pervasive rot baked into so much of Canada's political system.